

# IOWA BIRD LIFE

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE

IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

VOL. X

MARCH, 1940

NO. 1



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The Iowa Ornithologists' Union was organized at Ames, Iowa, February 28, 1923, for the study and protection of native birds and to promote fraternal relations among Iowa bird students.

The central design of the Union's official seal is the Eastern Goldfinch, designated State Bird of Iowa in 1933.

Publications of the Union: Mimeographed letters, 1923-1928; 'The Bulletin,' 1929-1930; 'Iowa Bird Life,' beginning 1931.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Iowa, \$1.00 a year (includes membership dues). Outside of Iowa, 50c a year. Special rate for all libraries, 50c a year. Single copies 25c each. (Keep the Editor informed of your correct address.)

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION OFFICE  
WINTHROP, IOWA

## THE DUBUQUE REGION AND ITS BIRDS\*

By E. P. HEUSER

As it is on the shores of oceans, lakes and streams that man builds his cities, so has Dubuque grown on the banks of the Mississippi. In the first years of the Nineteenth Century fur traders and lead miners prospecting with the Indians built the early cabins on the higher levels of the river valley. It was a time when men were thinking freedom, hope, and adventure. Dubuque thrived into an outpost for the great Northwest, and as a port on the west bank of the Mississippi became the starting point for settlers' trains and the supply center for new cities.

The slopes of the river terraces were leveled beneath industry and business. The streets climbed the bluffs where time had cut deep into the edges of the prairie; cottages and mansions began to take possession of the commanding outlooks. Thus the pavements rolled over the hill-tops to many neighborhoods of gardened homes. Though the pines which in the early days were rafted down the river have long ceased to feed the lumber mills which too have disappeared, the forest continues to travel over miles of steel trail to great wood-working plants. The lead mines that drew men to the hills have given way to acres of colleges and universities. And the white highways from every direction come down off the plains to modern stores and busy markets.

We live in a neighborhood of green heights, deep gorges, long shadows, tinted hazes on distant rims, and a great land for bird lore. It is a unique locality in that it escaped the glacial action. There is a narrow wedge in northeastern Iowa some 30 miles in width at the Minnesota line and tapering to the river near Bellevue over which there have been no glacial ices. For long periods preceding the glacial epoch the Mississippi and its tributaries had deeply gashed the country, and erosion has since continued without interruption to further accent those hills and valleys.

We feel the increasing interest in wild life, with game refuges being established along the river, and conservation measures being put into action here. The White Egret flashes more often in the shallows against the green willows, and the Pileated Woodpecker is less a curiosity in the heavier woods along the streams. The clear bugling of the unobtrusive Cardinal is a familiar sound out of the wild brush of the country and from the soot-dusted shrubbery of the city. The Scarlet Tanager is found on the thinner wooded hillsides, and the Towhee in the deep, timbered vales. The Brown Thrasher's superb song comes from the top of the oak over soaring daisy fields where camps of junipers tent the slopes, and the Whip-poor-will's call charms the evening from valleys where towered limestone palisades are weathered and carved into shapes. So, too, the Red-winged Blackbird is talkative in the floodlands. Sooner or later one seems to meet with all his bird acquaintances.

The visitor, then, traveling into Dubuque, finds himself on skylines of highways where sinking basins of colored farmland drop into indistinct distances and dark wooded horizons.

The broad river with its many islands and not too easily accessible sidewaters is a fine field for water-bird study, and is a highway for waterfowl. The sanctuaries are being discovered and occupied. Ducks, including the Wood Duck, are nesting, and it has been reported that during the past season some 2,000 ducklings were born and reared in the neighborhood of one of these sanctuaries.

However, the wilderness of oaks, elms and poplars on the lowlands above the city have recently been cleared in the establishment of a uniform river channel. There the General Pike Dam has changed the

\*With photographs reproduced through courtesy of Dubuque Chamber of Commerce. (These were furnished in the form of electrotypes with legends attached.)

river into a lake reaching almost from hill to hill, a mile or so in width, and extending miles up stream. The river, its islands, its traffic, the dam and part of the city, are magnificently viewed from the bluffs of Eagle Point Park some 400 feet above the water. Some of the convention time will be spent here.

The destruction of hundreds of acres of thickly wooded riverland has been vigorously opposed by outdoor lovers in general. Repeated manipulations of the water level above the dam continue to play havoc with wild life which is trying to re-establish itself. Conservationists have not yet effected satisfactory co-operation on this point.

Most of the Iowa birds nest in this vicinity. Fifteen of these are permanent residents. Six more species come from the North to winter. Midst the host of migrants that moves up the river valley, the Florida Gallinule, King Rail, Virginia Rail and Sora Rail require a bit more of the expert eye to discover.

The exquisite warblers are of course the principal May attraction along the wooded streams. We learn that 28 of the at least 34 varieties of warblers observed in Minnesota nest in that state, and as they are all migratory, they offer themselves for our observation. Of the rarer sorts, the Mourning Warbler has been interesting at Dubuque. An



Beautiful Drives Everywhere





Scenic Highways Lead to Dubuque

abundant flow of migrating warblers usually takes place in this neighborhood.

Prairie birds such as the pheasant are infrequent in the immediate vicinity. The call of the Bob-white, too, has all but disappeared from the echoes of a close radius about the city where it was formerly generously abundant. However, the Quail still lives a few miles out and is being nursed back into prosperity. How many kinds of birds live in the varied wilderness about Dubuque has by no means been accurately ascertained. With the changes in the river and the increasing protection of the sanctuaries, bird life is not remaining the same.

The Biological Survey promises the ornithologists a view of the American Eagle living near the river; and possibly the Osprey and the Duck Hawk. With the fine co-operation of the Biological Survey an opportunity will be offered to use their boats during the convention, for observation of bird life on the river.

This, then, is the region filled with ornithological possibilities that awaits you at Dubuque. Trips are being arranged to cover the different types of territory. We are interested that you find some new values in the hobby of bird study. The mighty Mississippi is important in the thoughts of America,—and nowhere does it offer more beauty than in its upper stream. We hope, therefore, when we see you in Dubuque to give you a greeting and entertainment worthy of your interest.

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## THE ANNUAL CONVENTION

Our eighteenth annual convention will be held at Dubuque, Iowa, Saturday and Sunday, May 11-12. The change in days was made in deference to the large number of teachers and students among our members. The dates will, we hope, coincide with the high tide of warbler migration in eastern Iowa.

A convention program of unusual interest is being planned by Dubuque Bird Club members. This is one of our most active local bird clubs, and we were glad to accept their invitation to hold our conven-

tion in their city. A fine convention is assured, and we trust that attendance will be up to our usual standard. Publication in March prevents our giving a summary of the program. As in other years, a mimeographed program complete with other timely information will be sent to each member at a later date.

Saturday, May 11, will be given over to talks and papers on birds and conservation, and that evening the annual Ornithologists' Banquet will be held. An effort will be made to vary the program as much as possible so that it will be of interest to all. We hope to have a representative of the U. S. Biological Survey on the program. Supt. Steele of the Upper Mississippi Wild Life Refuge will show films of the area. We expect Mr. Rosen to show us his colored films, and there will be other highlights.

The field trip will be held on Sunday. Various groups will visit the excellent bird territory radiating from Dubuque. One group will visit Cuttentberg, where a Government boat will be available for exploring islands in the river.

Make your plans to be at Dubuque May 11-12!

## THE BLUE GOOSE AS A MIGRANT THROUGH WESTERN IOWA

By BRUCE F. STILES

State Conservation Officer  
Council Bluffs, Iowa

The peak of the Blue Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) migration reaches southern Iowa about March 15, and northern Iowa about five days later. My earliest record is February 26 and my latest March 19, for first arrivals. For the last stragglers my earliest date is March 27, and my latest April 24.

J. Dewey Soper in his book on the Blue Goose says that they leave their wintering grounds on the Gulf coast of Louisiana during the latter half of March. This must be an error as they are nearly always in Iowa by the first week in March. My record of March 19 was made in the extreme northwest corner of the State, and as they make little more than 20 miles a day in northern migration, they must have been in southern Iowa by March 12 in that instance.

Bird students in other parts of the state can not conceive of the magnitude of this flight unless they see it for themselves. The Missouri



BLUE GEESE ON THE WING

This shows part of a flock which the author estimated as containing between 8,000 and 10,000 individuals. From a photograph taken in Mills County, Iowa, March 18, 1939.

River in Iowa is bounded on the east by a range of steep loess hills. From the river to the hills is a perfectly flat and fertile plain, varying in width from a few yards above Sergeant Bluff, where the river skirts the hills, to nearly 20 miles above the confluence of the Boyer near Missouri Valley. One of the principal crops in this valley is winter wheat, which is planted in the fall and remains green under the snow. As soon as it is uncovered in the spring it furnishes excellent forage for the migrating geese. Geese are grazers like cattle and their sharply serrated mandibles cut the tender shoots like scissors. Instead of injuring the wheat, this causes it to stool out and grow in greater profusion.

For about a month this narrow valley is alive with "honkers". Flocks may be seen in the air at almost any time. Probably 90 per cent are Blue Geese. Less than 1 percent are Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis* subspecies) and White-fronted Geese (*Anser albifrons albifrons*) and the remaining numbers are Lesser Snow Geese (*Chen hyperborea hyperborea*).

The fall migration is more easterly than in the spring. Scattered flocks of Canada and White-fronted Geese come down this valley during October, but I have never seen a Blue Goose to be sure of its identity, and Snow Geese are decidedly uncommon.

Flocks of Blue and Snow Geese rarely fly in the traditional "V" formation so commonly used by Canada Geese. Long, wavy lines and bow-shaped formations much broken up, are common flock forms. This and their higher-pitched voice will distinguish them at a distance from the Canada.

The first harbinger of spring along the Missouri bottoms is the Pintail (*Dafila acuta tzitzibon*). Word that "the Spikes are in", means that the geese will be along in a few days. They cross the Missouri state line about the last of February, and from then on there is no rest for the Game Wardens who usher the flocks up the valley to South Dakota and Minnesota. This takes about five weeks.

It is likely that 500,000 geese use this flyway, and concentrations of from 10,000 to 20,000 are not uncommon. Experienced observers have reported flocks of from 60,000 to more than 100,000. In my opinion, these estimates are somewhat over-enthusiastic, but however that may be, the geese certainly are here in vast numbers.



CONSERVATION OFFICER STILES.

author of this article, holding a Blue Goose, a Snow Goose and two guns taken from violators near the Missouri River. Frank Tucker, who assisted in apprehending the hunters, took the photograph, March 18, 1939. (The hunters were taken into court and convicted.)



## THE 1939 CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS IN IOWA

The total number of species recorded on the Iowa censuses in 1939 is exceptionally large. We would hazard a guess that it may be years before bird life in such variety will be found in Iowa so late in December. This circumstance was, of course, due to the abnormal weather conditions which prevailed up to and including the Christmas holidays. During the late fall and early winter of 1939, the weather was of unusual mildness, with temperature averaging far above normal and with little or no snow. Lakes and streams remained entirely open, with the result that ducks and other water birds stayed until long after their usual departure dates. Many species of land birds also lingered at least a month longer than usual. With weather remaining uniformly warm week after week, there was nothing to urge the birds southward.

The bird censuses for 1939 covered the State quite fully, and the accompanying table is worth a careful study. The Dubuque census revealed a winter rarity—the Holboell's Grebe. This region is within the winter range of this species, but we don't know of its having been recorded here previously. Good luck was with the Dubuque people on their trip. The variety of ducks on the reports indicates the state of the weather and open rivers. We had hoped for more Magpies on the lists. The Magpie at New Hartford could be called a permanent resident, for it was probably the bird that nested in Bremer County and has lived in the vicinity for three years.

It is difficult for observers to distinguish between Eastern and Western Meadowlarks in winter. Those who don't separate them merely list the bird as "Meadowlark", and this may be the safest way as both forms are found in the state. Since uncertainty is involved, it seems desirable to retain the word Meadowlark without prefix in the following table. With other bird names "Eastern" and other directional prefixes are omitted to save space. The form of Horned Lark found in Iowa in winter has never been satisfactorily determined. We add the word "Prairie" parenthetically since it is probable that it is the commonest form.

Eight censuses (which we use in somewhat abbreviated form) were taken from the supplement (pp. 113-115) in the February, 1940, issue of 'Bird-Lore'.

Data on place, time, weather and the observers who reported are given below.

AMES (by auto to a point 8 miles northwest of the college and return; 4 miles on foot): Dec. 27; 12:30 to 4 p. m. Cloudy; 4 in. snow. M. L. Jones.

ATLANTIC (2 miles southwest, along Nishnabotna River, through woods and open country): Dec. 24; 2:30 to 4:30 p. m. Cloudy; ground partly snow-covered; no wind; temp. 40°; 4 miles on foot. Ten members of Atlantic High School Bird Club and Atlantic Bird Club.

BACKBONE STATE PARK (Delaware Co.): Dec. 24; 8 a. m. to 4 p. m. Clear; ground bare; light north wind; temp. 20° at start, 40° at return; total foot mileage in the park per person, about 5, and an auto ride from Winthrop to the park; roadside birds included in the census. Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Jones, Miss Margaret Murley, Paul A. Pierce, F. J. Pierce. ('Bird-Lore')

CEDAR FALLS (near the Cedar River, wooded areas and cedar grove): Dec. 17; 8 a. m. to 12:15 p. m., 2 to 4 p. m. Partly cloudy; ground bare; some streams open, others partly frozen; temp. 33° at start, 55° at noon, 56° at 2 p. m., 53° at return. Observers in two groups: party I, 3 observers, 4 hrs., 5 miles; party II, 3 observers, 2 hrs., 2 miles. Miss Myrtle Gaffin, Mr. and Mrs. John Bliese, Mrs. R. M. Rugg, Mrs. Frank Stevens, Mrs. Ray S. Dix. ('Bird-Lore')

# CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS

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	Ames	Atlantic	Backbone State Park	Cedar Falls	Cedar Rapids	Council Bluffs	Iowa Moines	Dubuque	Harpers Ferry	Kokubuk	Kossauqua	New Hartford	Oden	Pierson	Sigourney	Sioux City	Sumner	Tama
Crow	7		45	12		4	3023	30	44	18	23	23	18	23	4	8	3	13
Chickadee	16	25	8	15	33	23	300	8	38	16	5	23	51	16	8	30	12	27
Tufted Titmouse					3	3	42	3		13	1				3			3
White-thr. Nuthatch	3	5	13	11	22	1	105	10	22	17	4	5	11	4	7	3	9	8
Red-breasted Nuthatch																		
Brown Creeper					1		25	1				2	1			14		1
Winter Wren	1										1							
Brown Thrasher							1											
Robin			5				2											
Bluebird							29	2				2	2					
Golden-c'd Kinglet				1			2											
American Pipit																		
Cedar Waxwing			118	4			3											
Northern Shrike																		
Starling	30	16	2		3		14	4	3		40		48	7	7		15	150
English Sparrow	200	25	100	35			500	300	649	39	100	4	86	94			100	50
Meadowlark	29						20					4	16	7				
Western Meadowlark							79		3			6		96		9		
Red-winged Blackbird																		
Rusty Blackbird							1											
Bronzed Grackle		12	3	7	6	3	186	8	57	8		1	19	7	5	100		12
Cardinal	1	2					34									3		
Purple Finch				1														8
Common Redpoll																		
Pine Siskin		5					25				15	1	23					4
Goldfinch	3	3	26	25	6	1	225	4										
Red-eyed Towhee		4					1											
Lark Sparrow							1000				26	1	79	56	36	100	19	45
Shrike-colored Junco	100	25	24	102	19	16	1000	36	76	30	26	8	250	1200	28	100		75
Tree Sparrow	300	1	300	112	6	1	2500	55	637	5	23		2	15				
Harris's Sparrow		30					11											
White-thr'd Sparrow		2					12					14						
White-thr'd Sparrow																		
Pas Sparrow												3						
Song Sparrow				3			23	2			11		3	1	8			
Chestnut-c'd Longspur																		
Number of Species	18	21	19	23	17	19	47	27	24	16	23	32	25	26	19	17	11	24
Number of Observers	1	10	5	6	7	3	23	9	2	5	1	2	4	2	1	5	10	1

Total Iowa List.....75 species.





CEDAR RAPIDS (Ellis Park, north along Cedar River for about 2 miles): Dec. 23; 1:30 to 4:30 p. m. Cloudy; brisk northeast wind; temp. 23°. Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Petranek, Mr. and Mrs. Steffen, Misses Lillian Clark, Myra Willis, Lillian Serbousek.

COUNCIL BLUFFS (City, Big Lake in Lewis Park, timbered ravine east of Lake, all within Pottawattamie County): Dec. 26; 7:30 to 10 a. m. Snowing, with poor visibility; northeast wind with velocity of 3 m. p. h.; temp. 24° at start, 25° at return; about 2 miles on foot. F. A. Fariday, Frank Starr, B. F. Stiles.

DES MOINES (Waterworks Park or Charles Sing Denman Wood, Walnut Wood State Park, Brenton's Slough, Dovewood along Beaver Creek, Morning Star and Fisher's Lake area; afoot and by auto): Dec. 23; 8 a. m. to 5:15 p. m. No snow; east wind, velocity 10 m. p. h.; temp. 26° at start, 36° at return. Observers in six different groups. Mrs. A. J. Binsfeld, Mrs. Chas. Christy, Ralph Childs, Evangeline Grooters, E. S. Hoek, Lester Haskell, Helen Hovde, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Miller, Olivia McCabe, Mrs. H. R. Peasley, Elizabeth Peck, Edna Rounds, Mrs. J. F. Smith, Dwight Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Tonkin, Frieda Troeger, Mr. and Mrs. Ross Thornburg, Mary Welch, Mrs. Toni Wendelburg, Kate LaMar. ('Bird-Lore')

DUBUQUE (City, Linwood Cemetery, Eagle Point Park, Brunswick marshes, Peru Bottoms, Sageville Road, and South Grandview Avenue): Dec. 17; 4½ hrs. a. m., 2 hrs. p. m. Clear; ground bare; no wind; temp. 40° at start, 50° at return; total miles afoot, 5; by car, 25. Observers in morning group, 8; in afternoon, 2 groups of 3 and 4. Misses Margaret Kohlman, Edith Ham, Ival Schuster, Mary Young, Mrs. R. W. Johnson, E. A. Hemsley, Paul Kort, David Reed, Henry Hermann (Dubuque Bird Club). ('Bird-Lore')

The Holboell's Grebes were first noted from Eagle Point Park, Dubuque, and were swimming in the middle of the Mississippi River. All nine members of the Club studied them, and when one of the grebes swam to the Iowa shore, E. A. Hemsley followed a path to the river and obtained a very good view of the bird. The very large size of the birds was noted, as well as the light gray throat and under-parts, and general grebe appearance. Soon after, the three birds swam to the opposite shore. The main channel of the river was open at the time, which was an unusual occurrence so late in the year.

HARPERS FERRY (Waterville, Paint Creek, Mississippi River bottoms from Waukon Junction to Dam No. 9): Dec. 19; 8:30 a. m. to 4:30 p. m. Cloudy, visibility poor; snow falling all day, mostly thawing as it fell; no snow on ground, except trace in p. m.; no ice on water, except on inclosed ponds; brisk northwest wind; temp. 35° at start, 28° at return; total miles afoot, 7; total hrs. afoot, 4; total miles by auto, 60; total hrs. by auto, 4. Observers together. Robert Burling, Arthur J. Palas. ('Bird-Lore')

KEOKUK (along west bank of lake at DuPont Powder Works, then west through woods near settlement, circling back and around east shore of lake; also through woods and fields of Fred Lemon farm near by): Dec. 24; 9:30 a. m. to 4 p. m. Clear; dry; no wind; temp. 30° at start, 38° at return. Observers in three groups. Robert Lamb, Leo Lemon, Basil Lancaster, Chas. Montague, R. F. Trump. ('Bird-Lore')

KEOSAUQUA (and vicinity, including Lacey-Keosauqua State Park): Dec. 23; 10 a. m. to 2 p. m. Clear; mild weather and slight southeast wind; temp. 35°. Warren N. Keck.

NEW HARTFORD (vicinity, and a 7-mile tour along Beaver Creek, through marshes and Beaver Grove woods): Dec. 25; 8:30 a. m. to 1 p. m. Clear; light northwest wind; temp. 30° at start, 35° at return. W. C. Polderboer, Emmett B. Polderboer.

OGDEN (wooded hillsides along Des Moines River 5 miles east of Ogden, dry ponds and willow hedges 5 miles north of Ogden, narrow wooded strip along Beaver Creek 7 miles southwest of Ogden, thence

to Ledges State Park): Dec. 17; 7:30 a. m. to 12 m., 1 to 5:30 p. m. Clear; ground bare and dry; light southwest wind; temp. 32° at start, 61° at noon, 57° at return. Observers worked in pairs not more than a half mile apart at any time; a total of 6 miles afoot and 46 by auto. W. M. Rosen, Sam Hyde, Robert Walker, Earl Peterson. ('Bird-Lore')

PIERSON (3 miles southwest of town; 8 miles east to Ranney's Knob, then down the valley of Little Sioux River): Dec. 17; 7:30 to 10 a. m., 12 m. to 5:30 p. m. Partly cloudy; ground bare; gentle south breeze; temp. 28° at start, 50° at return; about 30 miles by auto and 12 on foot. Wier R. Mills, Paul Osborn.

SIGOURNEY (Skunk River 1 mile south of city, down West Creek to its junction with Clear Creek, west and south of city): Dec. 23; 9:30 a. m. to 2:30 p. m. Cloudy; ground bare; 2 miles on foot, 8 miles by auto; all observations made while on foot. Mrs. W. C. DeLong.

The Red-shouldered Hawk was wintering one mile south of Sigourney, on highway No. 149 near the timbered area of Skunk River; it perched in a tree, breast facing the observer, and was studied with 8-power glass at a distance of 30 feet. It was first seen on December 14, 1939.

SIOUX CITY (Riverside, McCook Lake and Brown's Lake): Dec. 24; 9 a. m. to 4 p. m. Clear; no snow; light wind; temp. 28° at start, 31° at return. Observers in one party, with a total of 3 miles afoot and auto used between points. Ruth Schott, Mrs. C. L. Brown, Margaret Brown, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Armour. ('Bird-Lore')

SUMNER (oak and hickory woods, and along a small creek bed): Dec. 20; 11 a. m. to 1:30 p. m. Clear; ½ in. snow; sharp northwest wind; temp. 22° at start and return; total miles afoot, 5. Dolph Dean Allenstein, Leon Reimler, Chas. Anderson, Bobby Nieman, Leo Drew, Clinton Schrader, Milton Stevenson, Timmie Ries, James Gaede (Junior Audubon Club), and Miss Margaret Murley, Instructor.

TAMA: Jan. 2, 1940; temp. about 5°. Mrs. W. G. MacMartin. (It was impossible for Mrs. MacMartin to take her census at the usual time. She has been furnishing Christmas censuses from Tama for a number of years, and, although taken a little late, we are publishing her list with the others in order that her series will be unbroken.—Ed.)

## GENERAL NOTES

**Attracting Birds at Ackley.**—I have so many more winter birds than usual this year. I feed birds the year around and have over 30 different species all summer, as my bird baths draw them. I put suet in trees and red pepper on it, which keep the birds warm in cold weather. I had a martin house filled with Purple Martins, and one Mourning Dove tried all summer to nest in their house.—MRS. GRACE POTTER MILLER, Ackley, Iowa.

**American Magpies in Migration in Woodbury County.**—There was a heavy migration of Magpies along the Missouri River in western Iowa in December. It was first reported by Conservation Officer Walter W. Trusell, who saw a flock of several hundred Magpies west of Brown's Lake in Woodbury County on December 17, 1939. Officer Trusell skinned a beaver he had found dead and threw the carcass in a roadside ditch near Sergeant Bluff, Iowa. The next day when he passed the spot, a dozen or two Magpies which had been feeding on beaver meat flew up. I was unable to visit this area until some time later, and when I did I saw only one Magpie. The others were no doubt scattered over a considerable area before I made my trip to the region. The flock probably flew by leisurely stages from western Nebraska to the Missouri River valley. It will be interesting to watch the results of such a large migration; some of the stragglers may stay and nest as did those in Bremer County in eastern Iowa.—WM. YOUNG WORTH, Sioux City, Iowa.



**Magpie near Woodward.**—On November 3, 1939, while picking corn, I saw a Magpie, and on November 14 I saw two fly from our orchard north to the timber.—RICHARD A. GUTHRIE, Woodward, Iowa.

**Magpie in Clay County in 1937.**—On December 13, 1937, I saw a single Magpie along Highway 18, Clay County, between Spencer and Dickens, about half a mile east of the Little Sioux River. He was among some Crows and was feeding on the remains of a jack rabbit. This bird is not uncommon in this region during the winter season.—E. T. ROSE, Milford, Iowa.

(This note was prepared originally for the 'Wilson Bulletin'. Publication was delayed, and the note has now been transmitted to us by the former editor, Dr. T. C. Stephens.—F. J. P.)

**Winter Wrens at Vinton.**—On October 1, 2 and 3, 1939, eight little Winter Wrens were around our home all day. One stunned itself when it flew into a window. I put it into a bird cage for a while and had my first good look at one. They are really beautiful birds. I have noted them only occasionally in the woods in this vicinity.—WALTER L. BURK, Vinton, Iowa.

**Redpolls and Late Snipes.**—On November 16, 1939, Mrs. H. R. Peasley and I found two Common Redpolls near North River in Madison County. They were new birds for both of us, although we have looked for them many times. They were eating elm buds and we had a chance to observe them a half hour. Dr. and Mrs. Peasley found two Wilson's Snipes at Dove Woods on December 31, 1939. A warm spring kept water open and aquatic plants green.—MRS. ROSS J. THORNBURG, Des Moines, Iowa.

**Winter Notes from Story County.**—On December 28, 1939, while driving from Roland to Ames, a distance of about 16 miles, numerous large flocks of Meadowlarks were seen. The winter up to that time had been exceptionally mild; there was hardly any frost in the ground, and the first heavy snow of the season had come a day or two previously. On January 22, 1940, after more than two weeks of zero and sub-zero temperatures, two Meadowlarks were noted. The Starling has become a common permanent resident. Large flocks have been observed around town all winter despite 20° below zero temperature. The first winter Horned Larks, a large flock, were noted on December 28.—HENRY BIRKELAND, Roland, Iowa.

**An Attack Upon a Cuckoo's Nest by a Blue Jay.**—During a public nature tour conducted through Stone State Park near Sioux City, June 18, 1939, the successful attempt of a pair of Yellow-billed Cuckoos to defend their nest against the invasions of a Blue Jay was witnessed by a group of 45 persons.

A noisy Blue Jay was heard in a grove of young ironwood trees, and an investigation showed the jay attempting to force a female Yellow-billed Cuckoo from her nest about four feet from the ground in a young ironwood. An approach was made to within a few yards of the scene, but the birds seemed to take no notice of the group. For nearly ten minutes the Blue Jay repeatedly attacked the cuckoo, sometimes forcing her from her nest for a few seconds; but the cuckoo always returned promptly with renewed vigor. Finally, after about ten minutes of continual battling (feathers of the female cuckoo flying in all directions, to be picked up as souvenirs by members of the group), the male cuckoo appeared, and the two succeeded in driving the Blue Jay away. Several pictures of this rather rare scene were taken by members of the group, and the incident proved to be the high-light of this nature tour which was sponsored by the Sioux City Bird Club.—BORDEN C. BUCHANAN, State Park Naturalist, Stone Park, Sioux City, Iowa.

**Pheasants Increase.**—I have noted a distinct increase in the Ring-necked Pheasant population in this vicinity of northern Clayton County from observations during the past four years. Since no material change in cover and food has been recognized, the increase can be attributed to the extended closed season on these game birds in this county.—GLENN R. DOWNING, Monona, Iowa.

**Winter Birds in Western Iowa.**—Two Bronzed Grackles were seen by Paul Osborn on December 18, 1939. Magpies were seen several times after the first date of October 1. Bob-whites and Hungarian Partridges are increasing in number and were seen frequently near town. We believe the large patches of hemp along our streams account for the unusual number of Mourning Doves (76) seen on our Christmas bird census. On January 30, 1940, a farmer friend reported having frequently seen large numbers of Meadowlarks through the winter, and Paul Osborn reported large flocks of them all through the month of January.—WIER R. MILLS, Pierson, Iowa.

**Observations in Northern Iowa.**—We live on a 160-acre farm seven miles west of Marble Rock. During 1939 I observed 115 species of birds at my home or in the immediate neighborhood. I shall mention some birds which are not listed commonly in others' reports.

On March 7, 1939, I saw three Common Redpolls feeding on weed seed which stood above the snow in a field of oat-stubble. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker spent a week with us in the middle of April; his usual spring visit has been of only one day's duration. On May 10 I saw an Arkansas Kingbird sitting on a roadside fence. This was my only record for 1939, although I have two records for a previous year. A small flock of American Golden Plovers spent some time in a field where my brother was working in the middle of May. An Olive-sided Flycatcher was in the tree-tops of our grove on May 29. On May 16 a friend and I saw a flock of eight Bob-white along the roadside. Five houses which I had out for House Wrens were occupied by wrens during the summer. A Sparrow Hawk was seen December 10, and two Meadowlarks were seen on December 29. On December 29 I also saw a Northern Shrike.—PEARL KNOOP, Marble Rock, Iowa.

## RECENT BIRD BOOKS

**NATURAL HISTORY OF THE BIRDS OF EASTERN AND CENTRAL NORTH AMERICA**, by Edward Howe Forbush; revised and abridged by John Richard May (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1939; cloth, pp. i-xxvi+1-554, with 1 halftone & 96 colored pls.; price, \$4.95).

These are days when new bird books are projected in rapid succession. The fact that large, expensively-produced books can be made to pay their way and bring a financial return to their sponsors attests the growing popularity of bird study along vocational and avocational lines, and indicates the steady increase in the numbers of persons interested in ornithology. A generation ago a new bird work was often the event of a decade; nowadays even the most pretentious books are taken for granted.

In 1925, 1927 and 1929, Volumes 1, 2, 3, respectively, of Edward Howe Forbush's 'Birds of Massachusetts and Other New England States' were published. It was a very comprehensive undertaking and the finished product was one of the most important bird works ever published, destined to be an invaluable reference source for many years. Neither the author nor Louis Agassiz Fuertes, the artist commissioned to furnish the colored plates, lived to see the completion of the third and final volume.

The three-volume 'Birds of Massachusetts' has been out of print and difficult to obtain for several years. In lieu of reprinting the original



work, a revised, abridged edition was decided upon, and thus we have the present book. Dr. May, who was associated with Mr. Forbush and helped in bringing out the final volume of the earlier work, was chosen to prepare this book. The former book furnishes the backbone, but it has undergone very thorough revision and abridgement. The scope has been enlarged to include all birds ordinarily found in the United States west to the 95th meridian (which includes Iowa), as well as those found in Newfoundland and the Bermuda Islands. This enlargement made necessary the addition of more than 100 species, which are described by Dr. May. Four colored plates, by Roger Tory Peterson, have also been added.

To bring a three-volume work down to the confines of one volume required very severe trimming. Forbush's detailed descriptions of colors, plumages and field marks have suffered most, perhaps, but much excellent matter, in particular his lengthy word pictures in vivid style, had to be left out. The work of revision has been expertly handled, however, and the book contains a great deal of valuable information. The colored plates by Fuertes, which fate did not permit him to finish, are considered his best and most mature work. Allan Brooks finished the series of paintings for the Massachusetts book. The many photographs and pen sketches in the former book are not included in the present one.

It is hard to draw a comparison between this book and its well-known predecessor, the 'Birds of Massachusetts'. Bird students will continue to make use of the former book, when available. But for the many who will not have access to it, the new presentation will be found an excellent one; it is all that one could hope for in an abridged edition. The book is well printed and is strongly bound in library buckram.—F. J. P.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two important bibliographies have been published recently. The first is entitled 'A Bibliography of Birds', compiled by Reuben Myron Strong, and published by the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago. Two parts, or volumes, were issued a few months ago (price, \$11), and a third part, now in preparation, will complete the work. The other publication is 'Bibliography of California Ornithology', by Joseph Grinnell. This, the third and final installment of a very useful compilation, was issued as Pacific Coast Avifauna No. 26, by the Cooper Ornithological Club, Berkeley, Calif. (price, \$4).

The reviewer has often wondered how the bibliographer of the future will treat the numerous mimeographed bird publications of today. In one of the bibliographies mentioned above there is this explanation: "... newspaper articles are not included, nor, as a rule, articles from popular or sporting magazines. Nor has anything mimeographed been considered worth citing, because of its fleeting nature. A good deal of the current 'conservation' literature, too, is on a par with the average sportsman's writings; the factual basis is too meager, the imaginative or fictional element too large, to afford any great value to the serious student of birds."

#### MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We are glad to learn that a bird club was organized at Council Bluffs in December. Sioux City has had an active bird club for years, and prior to the organization of the Council Bluffs club, it was the only local bird club in western Iowa. Bruce F. Stiles, one of our members, helped to organize the Council Bluffs club. We wish it success and predict a successful future. S. J. Field is president, F. A. Fariday is vice-president, and G. H. Dorsett is secretary.

John L. Cole, a former member of the Union, has rejoined us and is now living at Nevada, Iowa. For the past several years Mr. Cole had been with the U. S. Forestry Service with work in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan.



We regret that we do not have sufficient space in 'Iowa Bird Life' to describe the travels of our members as fully as we should like. A number of members have made interesting trips recently. Mrs. Ross J. Thornburg spent two months at Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado last summer. It was her ninth visit to the park, and since she has 385 species on her "Life List", she didn't add any new ones, but she had a very interesting summer. We quote from her letter, in part:

"I observed the nest and young of a Nighthawk family for five weeks; also discovered the nests of two Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, a Willow Thrush, Hermit Thrushes, Red-naped Sapsuckers, Water Ouzels and Red-shafted Flickers. It was the first time I'd heard the Hermit Thrushes sing, as I had never before been at the park so early. They sing in June and early July. The Ruby-crowned Kinglets were also in full song. One of the Craighead boys was in camp for a few days, and I talked with him. He and three other boys had been cruising about the West. They had a young Prairie Falcon with them which they had taken from a nest in Wyoming. A book by the Craighead brothers, 'Hawks in the Hand', has just been published. Some wonderfully fine wild-life pictures were shown last summer. Ranger talks were given nightly, and they had guest-artist night once a week."

Mrs. W. G. MacMartin, our member from Tama who has entertained us with her colored moving pictures at several conventions, enjoyed a fine trip to Alaska during the summer of 1938. Of this trip she writes:

"The Herring Gulls escorted the steamer from Seattle to and beyond Cordova, Alaska, when the Sooty or Black Albatross continued the escort through the Gulf of Alaska. Small flocks of so-called Sea Parrots, dark-colored and flying close to the surface of the water, proved of great interest to tourists aboard. Along the 450-mile bus trip on the Richardson Highway from Chitina to Fairbanks we observed many of our common birds, such as juncos, Tree Sparrows, Song Sparrows, and English Sparrows. At Paxon Lodge, perhaps 150 miles south of Fairbanks in the interior, birds were numerous and many more varieties were observed, such as Robins, Phoebe, Magpies, swallows, yellow-throats, Chipping, Song and White-crowned Sparrows, as well as a Great Blue Heron. Paxon Lodge is located approximately 350 miles south of the Arctic Circle—rather close to the point where the sun does not dip entirely below the horizon during the 24 hours. The birds sang all night long. Not accustomed to such a chorus during the hours of rest, I spent most of the night (which was as bright as early twilight) distinguishing the various birds by their songs."

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